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MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES

VOLUME XXXII

FEBRUARY, 1917

NUMBER 2

ON THE MEANING OF 'ROMANTIC' IN EARLY GERMAN ROMANTICISM

PART II

The chief preoccupation of Friedrich Schlegel's mind during the half-dozen years preceding the earliest manifestoes of the Romantic School was the question of the nature, the relations, and the relative values, of "the ancient" and "the modern" in art. That there is some profound and significant unlikeness between the spirit, the informing idea, of classical and of modern art and taste—this was the assumption from which his earliest and most characteristic reflection upon æsthetic questions proceeded. The long essay *Über das Studium der Griechischen Poesie* (1794-5) is the outstanding illustration of the place which this antithesis had in his thought; but he could scarcely write upon any theme without giving evidence of his absorption in the problem.¹ There is, he declared in 1796, a sort of "civil war in the kingdom of culture"—a "Kampf des Alten und des Neuen"—and it is therefore indispensable to an understanding of the history of humanity that "the concepts of the ancient and the modern be given a definite meaning (*fixirt*) and be deduced from human nature itself."²

¹ Cf. especially *Über die Grenzen des Schönen*, 1794; *Lyceum-Fragment* 84; and the following from A. W. Schlegel's Berlin lectures of 1801-4, à propos of ancient and modern poetry: "Der verschiedne Geist beyder, ja der zwischen ihnen obwaltende Gegensatz, und wie man deswegen bey ihrer Beurtheilung von anders modifizirten Prinzipien ausgehn müsse, um jede ohne Beeinträchtigung der andern anzuerkennen: diess ist einer von den Hauptpunkten den mein Bruder und ich in unsern kritischen Schriften von verschiedenen Seiten her ins Licht zu setzen gesucht haben." (*Op. cit.*, III, 6, in *Deutsche Litteraturdenkmale* XIX, 6.)

² In the review of Herder's *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität*, *Jugendschriften* II, 42.

Schlegel's interest in this question, however, was not the interest of an historian but of an æsthetician. "Ancient" and "modern" expressed less a chronological than a philosophical distinction. The tendencies for which either term stood might manifest themselves, and admittedly to some extent did manifest themselves, in the period customarily denoted by the other. Schlegel's conception of "das Wesentlich-Antike," in particular, was much more the product of æsthetic theorizing than of historical inquiry; though he sincerely believed that conception to express the predominant character of Greek art, his generalizations about the ancients were so hasty and, in some points, so palpably absurd as to lend themselves very easily to Schiller's satire in the *Xenien*. When, in accord with the prevailing fashion of the time, Schlegel in his first period (1793-96) glorified ancient and belabored modern poetry, he was really engaged in formulating two antithetic critical theories, and in vindicating one of them at the expense of the other.

The antithesis, stated in more descriptive terms, was that between *die schöne Poesie* and *die interessante Poesie*, the "poetry of beauty" and the "poetry of the interesting"; or between "objectivity" and "subjectivity" as governing principles in artistic creation and æsthetic appreciation. The doctrine which Schlegel at this time held was, in essence, a sort of æsthetic rationalism. It regarded "beauty" as an "objective" attribute, which works of art do or do not possess, irrespective of their relation to the feelings and the experience of the artist, if not wholly irrespective of their relation to the feelings of the reader, hearer or beholder. An æsthetic value, to be genuine must be "of universal validity," neither expressive of, nor dependent for its effect upon, the subjective "interest" of this or that individual; and there is, or ought to be, an "allgemeingültige Wissenschaft des Geschmacks und der Kunst." The "pure³ laws of beauty," therefore, are objective and universal principles, rigid and invariable. The end of art is the attainment of this beauty through fidelity to these laws; its end is *not* to imitate or emulate nature, nor yet to record the inner reactions of the artist upon nature and life. The foremost of its laws, therefore, is that of self-limitation, restriction of its themes and its modes of expression, by the exclusion both of the intrinsically ugly and of whatever is inconsistent with the

³ "Pure" probably in the Kantian sense, *i. e.*, *a priori*.

rigorous unity, the clearness of outline and the singleness of total effect, of any individual work. There was in Schlegel's early æsthetic writings not a little of that smug talk about "good taste" and "technical correctness" (especially in the drama) which was later to become a favorite object of the Romanticists' ridicule.⁴

It is not, however, the purpose of this paper to offer any thorough exposition of the classicism of Fr. Schlegel's first period. Our concern is with his formulation of the opposite æsthetic ideal, which he at that time rejected, but with the definition of which, especially in the *Studium-Aufsatz*, he was scarcely less occupied. What I wish here to point out is that his conception of "das eigentümlich Moderne" was, in its essentials, completely formed long *before* the period of the *Athenaeum*, and did not materially alter when he passed from his *Gräkomanie* of 1793-5, through the transitional stage of 1796, to the Romanticism of 1797 and thereafter. The "romantische Poesie" of which we hear so much after 1798 was simply the "interessante Poesie" of the earlier period. What altered was only Schlegel's valuation of this type of poetry.

In the writings of 1793-5 the principal characteristics attributed to "the distinctively modern" are these: a disposition to imitate in art the "Fülle und Leben" which are the "Vorrecht der Natur," at the expense of the unity and coherency which are the "Vorrecht der Kunst;"⁵ a consequent inclination to over-ride all fixed laws and limits, "als wenn nicht alle Kunst beschränkt und alle Natur

⁴ For all this, v. *Über die Grenzen des Schönen* (1794), *Von den Schulen der griechischen Poesie* (1794), *Über die weiblichen Charaktere, usw.*, (1794), and especially the *Studium-Aufsatz* (1796) *passim*, in Minor's edition of Schlegel's *Jugendschriften*; also the (supposed) earlier form of the last-mentioned essay in *DNL*, vol. 143. As Alt has noted (*Schiller u. die Brüder Schlegel*, 1904), W. von Humboldt had, in *Die Horen*, 1795 (iv, 31-33), drawn the same contrast between *das Schöne* and *das Interessante*, had denied to the latter any "purely æsthetic" value, and had found a weakness for it to be a characteristic fault of modern taste.

⁵ *Über die Grenzen des Schönen*; in Minor, *Jugendschriften* I, 23. Observe how precisely Schlegel here defines, while damning, the characteristics which he later came to regard as the essence of the Romantic temper: "Das furchtbare und doch fruchtlose Verlangen sich ins Unendliche zu verbreiten, der heisse Durst das Einzelne zu durchdringen"—these two cravings, sprung from a common source, and characteristic of the modern spirit, he now holds to be the arch-enemies of both æsthetic and moral worth.

unendlich wäre;"⁶ a tendency to produce, not, as does ancient art, that "Befriedigung wo die kleinste Unruhe aufgelös't wird, wo alle Sehnsucht schweigt," but rather an insatiable longing;⁷ a relative indifference to "form," to pure beauty," in comparison with expressiveness and richness of content, and, in particular, an eagerness to catch and express, not the universal and typical (which alone is consonant with "beauty"), so much as the differentness of things, the unique and the individual—"ein subjektives Interesse an einer bestimmten *Art* von Leben, an einem individuellen Stoff;"⁸ an especial interest in individuals of exceptional originality, or force;⁹ a liking for the representation of the positively ugly or grotesque;¹⁰ a constant confusion and intermixture of *genres*;¹¹ a fusion of philosophical with purely æsthetic interests, so that "die Philosophie poetisirt und die Poesie philosophirt;"¹² and a lack of æsthetic disinterestedness and detachment on the part of the artist, a tendency to use all forms of poetic utterance as means for expressing his personal attitude towards reality, instead of devoting himself to the realization of pure, "objective" beauty in the work of art which he produces.¹³

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 24.

⁷ *Jugendschriften* I, 87, 89.

⁸ *Jugendschriften* I, 91, lines 19-22; 80, ll. 34-40. For the thesis that the universal, *i. e.*, the generic, not the individual, is the object of true (and of ancient) art, *cf.* I, 38-9, 89, 135. This craving for the representation of "the individual" is what Schlegel means by the often mentioned *penchant* of the moderns for *das Charakteristische*. W. von Humboldt also identified a preference for "Charakter-Ausdruck" (*i. e.*, expressiveness in the representation of the individual person or situation) with that craving for the "interesting" which he lamented in modern taste, as inconsistent with a pure appreciation of *Grazie und Schönheit* (*Die Horen*, 1795, iv, 33).

⁹ This is one of Schlegel's senses of "the interesting": "Interessant nemlich ist jedes originelle Individuum, welches ein grösseres Quantum von intellektuellem Gehalt oder ästhetischer Energie enthält" (*Jugendschriften* I, 109). Aesthetic condemnation is pronounced on this upon essentially Platonistic grounds: since such 'interestingness' involves the idea of relative magnitude and "since all magnitudes are capable of addition *ad infinitum*," there can be no such thing as a "höchstes Interessantes," *i. e.*, no fixed and absolute æsthetic standard with respect to this quality.

¹⁰ *Jugendschriften* I, 88, l. 39.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, I, 22, 89, 102-3, 122, 146, 150, 157.

¹² *Op. cit.*, I, 89.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, I, 81, ll. 1-23, and l. 46 to p. 82, l. 17.

Describe these characteristics in rhapsodical, instead of censorious, language, and you have most of the elements of Fr. Schlegel's later characterizations of Romantic poetry, and of *das Romantische* in general: universality of interest and of theme; insatiable progression and perpetual self-transcendence; *Streben nach dem Unendlichen*; glorification of *Werden* above *Vollendung*; supreme interest in the *Selbstdarstellung des genialischen Individuums*; inclusion even of the abnormal and "monstrous" in the province of art, as elements in "universality;" demand for the *Vereinigung aller getrennten Gattungen der Poesie*; identification of philosophy with poetry; and insistence upon the unrestrained freedom of the creative artist, "der kein Gesetz über sich leide." And, in particular, you have in the earlier and disapproving accounts of *das Wesentlich-Moderne* most of the features emphasized in *Ath.-Fgm.* 116. Though that fragment at first appears to be simply a eulogy of the novel as a *genre*, the ground of the eulogy is that the novel is peculiarly capable of attaining those qualities which Schlegel had long since described as the distinguishing traits of the "essentially modern."

Not only the characteristics, but also the principal historic embodiment, of the modern ideal in poetry, are the same for Schlegel before and after his adoption of that ideal as his own. Shakespeare, we are told, in a passage already cited in Pt. I of this study, is "unter allen Künstlern derjenige, welcher den Geist der modernen Poesie am vollständigsten und am treffendsten charakterisirt." But, to Schlegel in 1795, this means that the English dramatist is, in spite of, or because of, his genius, also the most striking example of the æsthetic aberrations of modern art—of "das grosse Übergewicht des Individuellen, Charakteristischen und Philosophischen in der ganzen Masse der modernen Poesie." Shakespeare's "unerschöpfliche Fülle" Schlegel cordially recognizes; "his individuality is the most interesting thus far known." Yet any critic who treats Shakespeare's poetry "als schöne Kunst" only falls "into the deeper contradictions, the greater his penetration and the more thorough his knowledge of the poet None of Shakespeare's dramas attains beauty in its *proportions* (ist in *Masse* schön); never does the principle of beauty determine the construction of the play as a whole. And even the beauties to be found in the parts are, as in nature, seldom free from an admixture of the ugly. What is beautiful is not there for its own sake, but

as a means to quite a different end—in the interest of the expression of character or of a philosophical idea. Shakespeare is often rough and unpolished when a finer rounding-off of his material would have been easy. He is so precisely for the sake of this superior interest. Not seldom his abundance means inextricable confusion, and the result of the whole is an endless conflict. It cannot even be said that he presents us truth in its purity. He gives us only a one-sided view of truth, even though it be the broadest and most comprehensive. His representation is never objective, but always personal,¹⁴ an expression of his individuality.”¹⁵ Even the greatest plays of Shakespeare exhibit the characteristic faults of modern art. Thus, *e. g.*, *Romeo and Juliet* exemplifies the “unnatürliche Mischung der reinen Dichtarten,” for it belongs to the class of modern dramas which may be called “lyrical”—not in the sense that they contain lyrical passages, but in the more significant sense that the poems themselves, while dramatic in form, are in essence merely “die dramatische Aeusserung einer lyrischen Begeisterung.” *Romeo and Juliet* is “but a romantic sigh over the transiency of the joy of youth.” The very excellence of the execution merely makes the more evident the “Monstrosität der Gattung.”¹⁶ Even *Hamlet*, “masterpiece of artistic sagacity” though it is, is yet only an unbeautiful picture of the complete disharmony of a human soul: “der Totaleindruck dieser Tragödie ist ein Maximum der Verzweiflung.” It is thus the best example of a “philosophical tragedy,” which is “the exact contrary to the æsthetic tragedy.” For the latter, which is “die Vollendung der schönen Poesie,” has “for its final outcome the highest harmony.”¹⁷

While Shakespeare in 1794-5 still represented for Schlegel the perversion of modern taste, even in a writer of the highest gifts, Goethe was then the object of the critic's supreme reverence and the ground of hope of a return to sound æsthetic principles and

¹⁴ *Manierirt*: the word, as Schlegel's definition shows, has for him this sense.

¹⁵ *Jugendschriften* I, 109; cf. also 107, l. 30.

¹⁶ *Jugendschriften* I, 102-3.

¹⁷ *Jugendschriften* I, 106-108. Alt (*Schiller u. die Brüder Schlegel*, p. 18) strangely refers to this passage as evidence that Schlegel at this period was “far removed from a disparagement of modern poetry”! For Schlegel's later recantation of precisely these strictures upon Shakespeare, see *Ath.-Fgm.*, 253.

practice. But it was, be it noted, a Goethe who had not yet published *Wilhelm Meister*, and who was praised wholly for his ‘classical’ qualities—for his “serenity,” his “balance,” his “objectivity,” his “nearness to the Greeks,” his freedom from the usual modern over-valuation of *das Interessante*. “Goethe’s poetry is the dawn of genuine art and of pure beauty . . . His works are an irrefutable proof that the objective is actually possible.” In the values that belong to *die charakteristische Poesie* he is perhaps surpassed by Shakespeare. But it is not at such inferior values that he aims: “das Schöne ist der wahre Massstab, seine liebenswürdige Dichtung zu würdigen.” Thus the time is ripe for a general æsthetic revolution, which shall bring to an end “die Herrschaft des Interessanten, Charakteristischen und Manierirten,” and renew the felicity already attained by Greek art, when—through a happy instinct, rather than by formulated principles—the laws of unity, balance, measure, of pure beauty, still ruled the practice of the artist.¹⁸

In 1798, when Schlegel has become a professed Romanticist, it is still Shakespeare who represents most fully the (now admired) characteristics of modern poetry. Thus in *Ath.-Fgm.* 247, he, Dante, and Goethe make up “der grosse Dreiklang der modernen Poesie”; and while Dante’s “prophetic poem” is “the highest of its kind,” and Goethe’s “rein poetische Poesie ist die vollständigste Poesie der Poesie,” it is Shakespeare’s “universality” which is “wie der Mittelpunkt der romantischen Kunst.” It is not even true that (as Haym implies) in the essay on *Wilhelm Meister* Goethe figures as the sole or the supreme representative of the critic’s new ideal of poetic excellence. When—remarks Schlegel—Goethe reaches the climax of his *Bildungsroman*, the point at which both his hero and his readers are to be enabled “das Höchste und das Tiefste zu fassen,” he finds in Shakespeare the “grosses Vorbild” which he needs for this purpose; “for what poet could better serve for this, than he who preëminently deserves to be called the Infinite?”¹⁹ No language quite so exalted is used of Goethe in the essay. His place here, relatively to Shakespeare, is the same as that which had already been indicated in the first number of the *Athenaeum* by A. W. Schlegel—whose *Beiträge zur Kritik der neuesten Litteratur*, in that number, constituted, it must be remem-

¹⁸ *Jugendschriften* I, 114-116.

¹⁹ The reference is, of course, to Goethe’s interpretations of Hamlet.

bered, the initial manifesto of "the new school." For Shakespeare, we there are told, Goethe has become "ein neues Medium der Erkenntniss; so dass *von beyden gemeinschaftlich* eine Dichterschule ausgehn kann." It is in having given to the new age a sense of Shakespeare's true meaning and value that a great part, if not the chief part, of Goethe's epoch-making significance is represented as consisting. In 1800, again, we have found the younger Schlegel describing Shakespeare as "das eigentliche Centrum, der Kern der romantischen Fantasie"—in the passage which constitutes the principal formal definition of "romantisch," the word here being expressly declared to be a synonym of "modern, in contrast with the classical poetry of antiquity."²⁰

Thus Friedrich Schlegel had the conception of 'the Romantic' in art before him from the first, both in abstract formulation and in its concrete embodiment in Shakespeare. The heart of his earlier æsthetic doctrine lies in a phrase already cited: alle Kunst ist beschränkt. But over against this 'classical' ideal he had already clearly conceived of an art to which the limitations of the supposed unchanging "laws of objective æsthetic validity" were intolerable: an art more enamored of life than of beauty; content to take nothing less than everything for its province; resolved to possess and to express the entire range of human experience; more interested in the individual variant than in the generic type; sensible that the abundance and infinite interconnectedness of Nature are incom-

²⁰ *Athenaeum*, III, 122; *Jugendschriften* II, 372. As a further illustration of the supremacy of Shakespeare in the poetic hierarchy recognized by the early Romanticists, and also as evidence upon their general conception of 'Romantic' poetry, it is worth while to cite Tieck's prospectus of his *Poetisches Journal*, at the end of the original edition of his *Romantische Dichtungen* (1799-1800): "Mein Hauptzweck wird sein, meine Gedanken über Kunst und Poesie . . . zu entwickeln. Sie werden sich daher vornehmlich an die Werke der anerkannt grössten Dichter der Neuern anknüpfen, von denen meine Betrachtungen immer ausgehn. So werden z. B. Briefe über Shakespeare einen stehenden Artikel in jedem Stücke ausmachen . . . worin ich . . . mich in historische und kritische Untersuchungen einlassen werde, die über die Werke dieses unerschöpflichen und immer noch nicht genug verstandenen Geistes Licht verbreiten können. Ähnliche Aufsätze über die ältere Englische und Deutsche und die glänzenden Perioden der Spanischen und Italiänischen Litteratur sollen damit in Verbindung gesetzt werden und nach und nach ein Gemählde der ächten modernen Poesie (nicht dessen was so oft dafür ausgegeben worden ist) darstellen."

patible with any sharp cleavage of things from one another, and not more afraid of "confusion" than Nature is; aware that the distinctiveness, the idiosyncrasy, of the individual artist's vision is one of the elements in this abundance of Nature, and ought therefore not to be suppressed in art; and mindful that the task which it thus sets before itself is endless, and that no stage reached in the progress of it can be definitive.²¹

The genesis of Romanticism, then, is very seriously misconceived, when it is supposed (as by Haym and many others after him) that the conception of "Romantic poetry" was formed by Schlegel only about 1796 or later; that he "abstracted it from *Wilhelm Meister*"; that it implied a sort of apotheosis of the novel among the literary *genres*; and that Schlegel's first elucidation of it was in the *Athenaeum* in 1798. The theory of Romanticism was, so to say, a by-product of the prevalent classicism of the early seventeenth-nineties. Desiring to define more clearly what they conceived to be the spirit and the ruling principles of the ancient art which they revered, several philosophical æstheticians of the period were led to define at the same time, with equal fullness, the spirit and ruling principles of the opposite of that art, to elaborate a theory of *das eigentümlich Moderne*. The result was that some of them—Fr. Schlegel notably, but not he only—presently transferred their alle-

²¹ This conception—the original Schlegelian conception—of Romantic poetry, as reproducing the *Fülle des Lebens*, and consequently as characterized above all by universality and expressiveness, was shared by Novalis: "Der Romantiker studirt das Leben, wie der Maler, Musiker und Mechaniker Farbe, Ton und Kraft. Sorgfältiges Studium des Lebens macht den Romantiker, wie sorgfältiges Studium von Farbe, Gestaltung, Ton und Kraft, den Maler, Musiker und Mechaniker." "Je persönlicher, localer, temporeller, eigenthümlicher ein Gedicht ist, desto näher steht es dem Centro der Poesie" (*Schriften*, 1837, II, 224-5).

The program of such a Romanticism, which aims at the portrayal of what Schlegel called *das Charakteristische*, has manifestly much in common with realism, but is differentiated by the place which it, with some inconsistency, gives to the "subjectivity" of the poet. Novalis, however, was chiefly responsible for introducing a very different conception of 'the Romantic'—due partly to the influence of certain older, popular senses of the word—whereby it signifies 'the remote' 'the strange,' 'the ill-defined': "in der Entfernung wird alles romantisch" (*ibid.*, p. 221; cf. also p. 236). The common element in the two conceptions was the notion of 'the infinite' as the object of art—this notion coming, through a confused association of ideas, to be taken in two highly antithetic senses.

giance to that which they had at first studied chiefly in order that they might the better condemn it. Grown accustomed to its dreadful face, they ended by embracing it. By 1798 Fr. Schlegel had for nearly five years been discussing Romantic poetry—under another name. And he can not have derived from *Wilhelm Meister* a conception with which he was entirely familiar before he had read that romance.²² What befell in 1796 was neither the discovery, nor the invention, of the Romantic doctrine of art by Fr. Schlegel, but merely his conversion to it.

Who, or what, was the means of grace chiefly instrumental to that conversion? Upon an adequate discussion of this question I cannot, for lack of space, here enter. I must be content to say, without argument, that in the case of one famous writing published in 1795-6 there is conclusive evidence of its immediate and powerful effect in the alteration of Schlegel's æsthetic opinions; and that this writing was not *Wilhelm Meister* but Schiller's essay *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*.²³ Schiller here offered a vindication of the moderns upon principles peculiarly adapted to impress Fr. Schlegel—principles which, in fact, became the basis of his subsequent conviction of the superiority of 'Romantic' art. But Schlegel's æsthetic theory had from the first been in a state of unstable equilibrium; only a slight impulsion was needed to turn it upside down. The limitations of 'classicism' were uncongenial to his temperament; and it is frequently manifest—especially in

²² The essay *Über die Grenzen des Schönen* was finished by April, 1795; that *Über das Studium usw.* was begun in the spring of 1794, finished by December, 1795, but not published until 1797. The footnote referring to *Wilhelm Meister* (*Jugendschriften* I, 106) is evidently a later addition. The earlier form of this essay (*Vom Wert des Studiums der Griechen u. Römer*, first printed in *DNL*, 143) was completed by July, 1794; I am not, however, convinced that the *DNL* Text is identical with the original. *Wilhelm Meister* appeared in parts, 1795-6. The first mention of it in Friedrich's letters to his brother is under date of June 16, 1795; the elder brother had not then seen the book.

²³ Especially the first two parts, published in the *Horen* at the end of 1795. The decisive importance of this essay in Schlegel's philosophical development has already been emphasized by Enders (*Friedrich Schlegel*, 1913, pp. 259-263) and Walzel (*Deutsche Romantik*, 1908, pp. 29-31; cf. also his "Schiller als Romantiker" in *Vom Geistesleben des 18. u. 19. Jahrhunderts*). To the arguments presented by these writers I had hoped to add something in this paper, but the attempt must be postponed to another occasion.

the passages on Shakespeare—that the youthful critic secretly admired much that he felt obliged by the rigor of his creed to condemn. Not only was his nature thus out of harmony with his doctrine; his doctrine was also out of harmony with itself. It contained from the beginning explicit theses or definite admissions—derived largely from Kant—which were, though he was not yet aware of the fact, incongruous with the sort of æsthetic gospel that he was then so ardently preaching. But the analysis of these ‘internal strains’ in Schlegel’s pre-Romantic philosophy of art must also be deferred to some other occasion.

It remains only, in conclusion, to bring all this to bear upon the semasiological question propounded at the beginning of this study. We have seen that the Romantic æsthetics was formulated, I will not say altogether clearly, but about as clearly as it ever was, before the word ‘romantic’ was definitely chosen as its designation, and also before the doctrine itself was adopted by its formulator. What Schlegel meant by the “romantische Poesie” which he extolled after 1797 was, as has been shown, in all essentials the same thing as he had meant by “interessante Poesie” in 1794-6, *viz.*, the qualities and tendencies which he conceived to be distinctive of modern literature. It can not, therefore, be held (in spite of the apparent testimony of *Ath.-Fgm.* 166 in favor of Haym’s view), that the term “romantische Poesie” primarily signified either “Romanpoesie” or “romanartige Poesie,” or that it contained an implicit reference to *Wilhelm Meister* as the typical romantic book. It signified from the first, as both Schlegels in their eventual explanations of it testified, “eine eigentümlich moderne, nicht nach den Mustern des Altertums gebildete Poesie,” together with the ideals and æsthetic values which they believed to be alien to the spirit of ancient art.²⁴

²⁴ See Pt. I of this article, *MLN*, xxxi, 389-392. Note also the language of A. W. Schlegel when, in 1809, he offered a retrospective summary of the original aims of the Romantic School. He has been speaking of the barrenness of the so-called ‘classical’ period of modern literature; and continues: “So ungefähr standen die Sachen immerfort, bis vor nicht langer Zeit. einige, besonders Deutsche Denker, versuchten . . . zugleich die Alten nach Gebühr zu ehren, und dennoch die davon gänzlich abweichende Eigenthümlichkeit der Neueren anzuerkennen. . . . Diese haben für den eigenthümlichen Geist der modernen Kunst den Namen ‘romantisch’ erfunden” (*SW.*, 1846, v, p. 9).

But it may still be asked: given this as the meaning to be expressed, why should 'romantisch' have been the word chosen to express it? The answer is not difficult. *Modern* would not do, because it suggested a merely chronological distinction, whereas, as we have seen, much more than a chronological distinction was intended. The earlier antithesis *schön vs. interessant* would hardly serve, after Schlegel's change of view, since to most ears it would imply a depreciation of precisely the kind of poetry which he now regarded as the higher. In 1796, in a typically transitional writing, we find him formally urging the adoption of the words "objectiv" and "interessant" as "new technical terms" to distinguish the Sophoclean from the Shakespearean type of tragedy.²⁵ This proposal soon fell to the ground. Even *interessant*, one may conjecture was open to two objections. While *modern* had too exclusively chronological a connotation, *interessant* had no chronological connotation at all; and it had acquired, through its use by Schlegel himself and by W. von Humboldt, a distinctly dyslogistic coloring. Meanwhile, there lay ready at hand a word, as it seemed, ideally adapted to convey the conception present to Fr. Schlegel's mind. 'Romantisch' had hitherto chiefly meant for the Schlegels (as has been shown in the former part of this study) not, indeed, 'modern' in general, but 'post-classical,' including specifically both the medieval and the early modern. It thus, even in its purely historical or chronological sense, was better fitted than *modern* to express one side of the æsthetic antithesis now in question; for it was in the Middle Ages and in the earlier modern period that the qualities which Schlegel had defined as antithetic to the classical were best represented, while the later modern centuries had been characterized by pseudo-classical revivals and other deviations from type. In particular, *romantisch* was from the first associated in Fr. Schlegel's mind with Dante, Cervantes and Shakespeare; and as we have seen, it was these, especially the last, who, both before and after Schlegel's change of view, were to him the typical representatives of *die interessante Poesie*, of *das Wesentlich-Moderne*. Above all, *romantisch* had a less fixedly chronological import than *modern*, and was therefore more capable of connoting certain æsthetic characteristics, the exclusively modern origin of which was a significant but not the essential fact. Thus no other single word could,

²⁵ In the *Vorrede* to *Die Griechen u. Römer; Jugendschriften* I, 83.

from the point of view of Schlegel's own usage, express so well as *romantisch* precisely what he wished to convey. In view of these considerations, we have every reason for regarding, not only the meaning given to *romantisch* by the Schlegels in 1799 and thereafter as the original meaning, but also the grounds then assigned for their selection of the word as the original grounds. Haym's long-current explanation of the signification and origin of the term, as well as the usual account of the genesis of the idea, must accordingly be rejected. Only—one must add, in order to make Haym's error intelligible—it is true that the adjective continued to have at times, for Fr. Schlegel, some obscure association with the noun *Roman*, in a sense of the latter which included the novel as well as the medieval romances; and that in the characterization of *die romantische Poesie* in *Ath.-Fgm.* 116, this association of ideas—either through confusion or, as one suspects, through a desire to mystify his readers—is made conspicuous. But even in this passage, as we have already seen, Schlegel is only secondarily expatiating upon the possibilities of the *Roman* as a *genre*; he is primarily setting forth, as he had often before set forth, the æsthetic aims and temper which to him differentiated truly modern from classical art.

A. O. LOVEJOY.

Johns Hopkins University.

THE OLD ENGLISH POEMS ON ST. GUTHLAC AND THEIR LATIN SOURCE

All scholars agree that the 1353 verses in the Exeter Book concerning St. Guthlac form two distinct poems, the first running from 1 to 790 and the second from 791 to 1353. There is less unanimity of opinion, however, with regard to the question as to whether both parts were based on the *Vita* of the saint by Felix.¹ No one denies that the second part, which we may designate as *Guthlac's Death*, depends upon the *Vita*; but such a relationship has been thought by some not to exist for the first poem, which we may call *Guthlac the Hermit*. Since I have, myself, been guilty of expressing conflict-

¹ Ed. A. S. S., Apr. 11, 38-49.